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775 Man was higher on the scale than woman.[20] Progress toward
[562] Nipphan was not assured but had to be earned. With sinful behavior a person might be catapulted back to being a beast. He who stole would "be born and die 500 times before he could even grow up." Almost everyone had to be sent to purgatory
[776] where demons carried on tortures until he had suffered enough to be released for rebirth. The evil spirits (phī) that wandered frighteningly in Bang Chan were part of the legions whose job was to increase deserved suffering on this earth.

771 The people of Bang Chan felt they could discern even
782 of themselves who was meritful and who was not according to
828 human circumstances, constitution, and behavior. A meritorious person was healthy, happy, and successful in all undertakings. He enjoyed good health and long life, a kindly personality, many fine children, wealth, high status, intelligence, and luck. Astrologically, he was born on a day
[775] of good confluences, of gold and auspicious signs. He who lacked merit, because of sins committed perhaps many ages ago, was born on an unfortunate day. He suffered early death, deformities, unhappiness, poverty, and had a cruel nature.
[783] Illness, whether supernatural or natural, whether induced by wind or sorcery or what, struck as part of the suffering brought on by former sin. It was accepted in the conviction that whoever suffered had brought it on himself. When merit ran out, or when sin cancelled out and then exceeded one's merit, suffering and premature death occurred, despite all human efforts. Because of the prevalence of illness and of life's difficulties, major and minor, no one, no matter how outwardly fortunate and so evidently meritorious, had at this earthly level of existence enough merit to escape some suffering and frustration. By the same token, though, no person was without hope. By making merit or by suffering in this life, existence would be happier in the next. The making of merit was in the forefront of daily conscious effort and even conversations of the people of Bang Chan.

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789 The long-range protection against all illness was to
[577] live virtuously and make merit. However, to guard against
[782] temporary supernatural intrusions, everyone possessed and usually wore Buddha lockets and other amulets. Some
[304] underwent tatooing, men having Cambodian or other figures, women, 7 small dots tatooed on the torso under the arm.

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20. Men had achieved greater "other-worldliness" while women were more bound by the phenomena of the flesh (cf. Kirsch, 1961).

843 [775] She might also be troubled by the ghost of anyone who had died violently. This ghost, a phī tai thang klom, caused "the worst of all possible deaths." The phi krasū spirit,[25] entering through her anus, also might cause death by consuming her faeces, organs or the child's entrails. It was more dangerous during and after childbirth than during pregnancy (Textor:304-320). The [753] supernatural disease missile called "khun" might also strike. "If the mother is under 9 months pregnant, the baby inside can protect (itself). If this happens during the ninth month, the doctor uses holy water to extract it at the time of birth." Khun was recognized by "extra pain occurring just before the baby comes out." To protect [751] themselves, women wore extra talismans or had 7 dots • [304] tattooed under the arm.

843 845 There was no assumption that what was born was inevitably to be human. When people said of a woman who had died pregnant, "the child ate the mother;" or, at a miscarriage, "the mother ate her child," or if many of a couple's children died, "they eat their children," the charge might be merely the comment of a vituperous neighbor, but the reality of vicious, autonomous beings, human or otherwise, in the womb was unmistakable. A certain woman died pregnant. The fetus, removed surgically, was observed to have 2 visible teeth, which indicated it was a non-human, yak (giant). However, a child might also be the soul of an angel in the form of a falling star that entered the womb in the advanced stages of pregnancy. "If such a baby lives it is pure and is a very wonderful child." Episodes were described of women giving birth to "gold," "jewels," "a monkey," "a fish's stomach," and a mouse-like "Golden Child." Sometimes these

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[771] [783] [514] [262] 25. This spirit ate like a dog, not like a human being, in eating faeces and putrid meat (Hcf.46). No revulsion nor idea of filth and contamination was found in Bang Chan's attitudes about faeces or urine. The infant in the womb eat peaceably on the mother's faeces. It was lucky to dream of faeces. In daily life human and animal excretions, like sins at the festival of Loy Krataung, were carried away by the canal waters. Bang Chan Buddhists recognized a need for cleansing, but not for purification. Since neither faeces nor sins were filthy the water was not contaminated. Even putrid meat was not disgusting in the context of the perishability of the flesh, but as food it was revolting. Muslims, however, had built in contamination to their concept of sin, so required purification.

759 the slight differences in ministrations. "The Muslim mid-
795 wife massages more than the Buddhist." The women easily
844 entered into reciprocal courtesies. The Muslim woman knew
571 the steps in the Buddhist winnowing ceremony and performed
[852] them as desired. One Buddhist mother dispensed, however, with the winnowing "because the midwife was Muslim." A Buddhist woman made up the khwan khăo in the fashion specified by the Muslim midwife and participated in the latter's teacher-rite.

795 Certain fundamental ideas of the Muslims led to rein-
779 terpretations of familiar Buddhist terms and activities.
[774] "Khwan" referred to the soul, but with no implication of reincarnation. "Bun," meaning "merit" to the Buddhist,
[782] meant charitable giving in the sense of tithes, for Islam prescribed that a portion of one's income be given to the
[177] poor. On the other hand, the Muslims had taken over many Buddhist practices: for one, the acceptance of Buddhist holy water as a cure for spirit attack.

795 Completely Muslim was the stress on physical and
[783] moral purification as an objective of every rite, and conversely, the prevalence of the idea of defilement.
[304] "Circumcision is to cleanse the body before growing up," it was said. Muslim mortuary rites were elaborate pro-
[764] cedures for purification. When a Muslim baby died, the Buddhist midwife said, "The body was cleaned before
[831] burial," implying thorough measures beyond his ordinary experience. Procreation was viewed as dangerous and
[834] contaminating. The behavior that hid sexual phenomena at the same time by constant prescriptions kept sexuality
[562] much more in mind. Muslims separated males from females, for example, at feasts. No Muslim male ever became a midwife.

795 The events surrounding childbirth illustrated the
843 differing viewpoints between Muslim and Buddhist. In the
844 seventh month of her pregnancy, a Muslim woman called on her chosen midwife, and gave her a gift of betel pepper leaves and areca nut to assure her services (fàk thong: to deposit gold). On returning home, she went as
[273] fast as possible "to insure fast delivery." Since Muslims frowned on liquor, their medicines were made up of hot-tasting spices in hot water. Yet one Muslim mid-
795 wife prescribed large doses of liquor before and during
844 parturition. For labor and delivery, a Muslim was stricter about utilizing the privacy of the small enclos-
[562] ed room, if there were one, while in the Buddhist household "it could be anywhere" in the house. Muslim men, except for husband, brother, or father, were excluded from the scene. The Muslim khwan khăo contained "7

phlai and Bamboo cutter under the house "so the child would not roam away from home." The circumcision (akiko) performed up to the eleventh year, allied a child to a human group. "Circumcision is to accept the new-born baby into the status of human beings." In a corresponding ceremony for girls, the To Iman "cut a little piece of the labia." However, some Muslims had the full winnowing ceremony performed. If it were not, the child was raised aloft in the midwife's hands with the words, "Mother Sī, Mother Sāk, may this child be cool and happy!" The new-born baby was then laid in a cloth cradle. Fruits were hung over the tray or cradle. If a lactating Muslim mother accepted another's child to nurse, the 2 babies had to be of the same sex "lest later in life they marry, in which case theirs would be an incestuous, brother-sister marriage." The Buddhists entertained no such idea, so nursed babies of either sex as needed. A Muslim view of colostrum as "like pus from a sore" carried a more negative overtone than the Buddhist's statement: "At first the mother's milk is too dilute to be useful."

At the annual homage of a Muslim midwife to her teacher each of her patients of the year sent a kilogram of sugar, one coconut, one or 2 liters of glutinous rice, and a hen (if a baby girl had been born) or a rooster (if a boy). The chicken was killed by the midwife and made into curries for mosque officials (men) invited to the ceremony. The incense and candles were burned "while she thinks of her teacher."